



I Was Born This Way: A Gay Preacher's Journey through Gospel Music, Disco Stardom, and a Ministry in Christ

Carl Bean

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Motown recording artist: As a young singer, Carl Bean brought churches to their feet and dance floors to their knees. From 1964 to 1972, he was the lead vocalist for the Alex Bradford Singers; his hit Motown single "I Was Born This Way" was the first gay liberation dance club hit. Unity Fellowship Church of Christ: Founded by Bean in Los Angeles in 1982 for gay, lesbian, and transgendered African Americans, UFC today has churches in twelve cities nationwide, including Brooklyn, Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Newark, and Chicago. Amazing story of triumph: Bean was abused by an uncle from a young age, and he watched his birth mother die from an illegal abortion. But for all the roughness of his childhood, he was blessed in his influences. Reverend Marcus Garvey Wood, the pastor of his church, was a close friend of Martin Luther King; after Bean's suicide attempt at age fourteen, he was treated by a psychiatrist who encouraged him to accept his homosexuality. Among his many mentors were Vinnette Justine Carroll of the Urban Arts Corps, Lillie Jackson of the NAACP, and Estelle Brown of the Sweet Inspirations. A message of unconditional love and tolerance: "If we accept the world's scorn, we grow weak" Bean preaches. "If we accept God's love, we grow strong. My life is testimony to one statement and one statement only God is love, and love is for everybody"

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